



# MSCP NEWS

## EARTH DAY SPECIAL EDITION

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### NEW OPEN SPACE LAND ACQUISITIONS ARE FUNDED

**F**ebruary 23, 2001, was an important date for preserve-land acquisition in San Diego County. The Wildlife Conservation Board, which is administering 2000 Park Bond Act and 2000 Water Bond Act funds designated for habitat land acquisition, approved over \$21,000,000 in grant funds. Some of these funds will be used to purchase land at Buena Vista Lagoon Ecological Reserve and in the City of San Diego's Montana Mirador Preserve.

The County received a grant of \$6,110,000 and a Transportation Enhancement Act grant of \$3,000,000 to acquire over 5,300 acres of the Santa Ysabel Wildlife Area, near Julian. Acquired with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy, a frequent partner of the County for land acquisition, this preserve links with Volcan Mountain Preserve, and contributes to the San Dieguito River Park. The Nature Conservancy will be assisting the County in managing the land.

The Wildlife Conservation Board also approved funds to advance land acquisition within the MSCP Subarea. The County of San Diego, working in partnership with the State Department of Fish and Game, has worked to identify priority acquisition opportunities to take to the Wildlife Conservation Board for funding requests.

In 1999, the Hollenbeck Canyon Wildlife Area was created to identify important habitat lands in the Jamul area of San Diego County. Owned by Lawrence and Barbara Daley, the heart of Hollenbeck Canyon covers nearly 4,000 acres. Last year, the County acquired nearly 600 acres of habitat land along State Route 94 in Jamul to create the Lawrence and Barbara Daley Preserve section of the Hollenbeck Canyon Wildlife Area. On February 23, the Wildlife Conservation Board approved over \$11,000,000 in grant funds to purchase the remainder of the Daley property.

This project will protect critical native habitats, including coastal sage scrub, chaparral, oak woodlands, riparian corridors, freshwater marshes, and grasslands. These plant communities provide habitat for over 13 sensitive plant species and 25 animal species, including the California gnatcatcher, San Diego thornmint, Engelmann oak, Palmer's sage-wort, Cooper's hawk, and red-shouldered hawk. Most of the property to be acquired is pristine and undisturbed; other areas provide opportunities for habitat restoration and enhancement.



This significant acquisition will preserve an important wildlife corridor, linking public lands to the east with the existing Daley Ranch Preserve owned and managed by the California State Department of Fish and Game. The Lawrence and Barbara Daley Preserve will be managed by Fish and Game.

The Wildlife Conservation Board has been an important partner in land acquisition and preserve assembly. Board members and staff have supported the County's habitat planning process, and have taken actions that resulted in the purchase of thousands of acres of open space. The County looks forward to many years of cooperative acquisition with the Wildlife Conservation Board and Fish and Game.



# THE MULTIPLE SPECIES CONSERVATION PROGRAM

## THE PLAN

**S**an Diego County is known nationwide for its tremendous diversity of plants and animals and for its number of rare and endangered species. A study in the January 1997 issue of Science magazine identified San Diego County as one of two counties in the United States that are considered "hot spots" for unique and unusual species. On the other hand, San Diego County has also been known for its tremendous population growth associated with the military, tourism and technological industries. Unfortunately, this increase in growth rate has resulted in the decrease of the number of unusual species in the area. According to former Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt, San Diego County was heading for a "train wreck." Though the California Environmental Quality Act required the reduction and mitigation of impacts from development projects, as development occurred, small areas of open space that were disconnected from other habitat areas were created. Sometimes, these areas were too small to support any significant populations of wildlife. Furthermore, as the California State and Federal Governments listed individual species as rare and endangered, local and wildlife agencies as well as property owners would scramble to protect the species. This often resulted in even more small areas of open space and caused confusion and conflict with economic growth issues.



In the early 1990's, a concept grew from the Federal Endangered Species Act to create coordinated plans to deal with high numbers of sensitive species as well as development. These plans, known as Habitat Conservation Plans, created a process to

identify and conserve the most important habitats. In return, development could be streamlined into the areas that are less biologically important.

Because San Diego County contains such a high number of sensitive and potentially rare and endangered species, the Habitat Conservation Plan was taken a step further. This led to the concept of a Multiple Species Conservation Program Plan, which assessed 85 species that were already listed as either rare or endangered.

The Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Plan was the result of 6 years of intense planning and review by a diverse group of private conservationists and developers as well as a number of public agencies, including the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game. This particular plan covers the southwestern portion of San Diego County. It consists of 582,000 acres and includes the Cities of San Diego, Poway, Chula Vista, Santee, El Cajon, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, Imperial Beach, National City and a portion of San Diego County's unincorporated area. An overall plan was approved by the City of San Diego in March 1997. For each jurisdiction to become participants in the plan, they must adopt their own Subarea Plan. The City of Poway adopted its Plan in August 1995. The County of San Diego adopted a Plan for the unincorporated portion of the MSCP in October 1997. Since then, the City of Chula Vista has also adopted a plan.

## WHAT THE PLAN DOES

**T**he County plan is divided into three segments. The first two segments contain "hard line" areas in which landowners have committed, through negotiation with wildlife agencies and County, areas that will be set aside as preserve lands. In return, there are also areas authorized for take of habitat. The third segment contains no actual preserve areas, but it does include land that has been identified for its biological importance. In this area, an ordinance for addressing biological mitigation provides incentives to develop in less important habitat areas and mitigate in the areas that have been identified as important. There are also specific provisions that address the need to protect important populations of rare and endangered species. The overall effect of these plans is to provide

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for large, connected preserve areas that address a number of species at the habitat level rather than species by species, and area by area. This will create a more efficient and effective preserve system as well as provide better protection for the rare, threatened and endangered species in the coastal region.

These plans, with exactions from development through mitigation and local, State and Federal funding, will protect land that has been set aside for preservation. This preservation may take the form of a Conservation Easement that dedicates the land for open space in perpetuity, or it will take the form of an actual purchase of fee title by a public agency or environmental land trust. Out of the 582,000-acre area examined under the MSCP, the goal of the plan is to acquire or permanently protect 172,000 acres. In the three years since the plan was approved, there has been more than 15,000 acres of land purchased outright. In addition, a National Wildlife Refuge was set up in the Otay and Rancho San Diego portions of the County to assist in land acquisition. The County and City of San Diego have committed several million dollars a year toward the acquisition and maintenance of preserve lands. In order to insure the conservation of unique resources, major programs are in place to monitor and manage the lands once they have reached preserve status.

## **THE FUTURE**

In the northwestern portion of the County, the San Diego Association of Governments is coordinating a multiple species program referred to as the Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP) Plan. The County is also embarking on an additional Subarea for the MSCP. It will extend from the area north and east of Camp Pendleton to the Riverside County Line and east to the Cleveland National Forest boundary. The final phase of the County plan will be the eastern portion of the County, encompassing the mountain and desert areas of the County.



## **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

It is important for the public to learn and understand the MSCP program. It must be kept in mind that national attention has been focused on these plans so that there have been major Federal and State efforts to acquire and protect land. Positive support is critical for the continued and future success of these programs. For more information on the County MSCP plan, please visit the County web page at <http://www.sdcdplu.org>. For more information on the City of San Diego Multiple Species Plan, please visit <http://www.sannet.gov/mscp/>.

## **THE WATERSHED** by Neal Biggart, San Diego Stream Team

A watershed is a precious thing. It is part of the earth's cleansing systems. It's flora and fauna are supported by the gravity flow of water from the top of the hills to the ocean. A watershed is defined as "the land mass that captures the rainfall and concentrates it into streams and rivers". The problem with San Diego's watersheds is that they are being badly and perhaps irrevocably damaged by human activities. When precipitation falls on the tops of hills, some of it soaks in and becomes groundwater. It slowly follows gravity and begins to collect at the surface of the hillside forming rivulets. The rivulets flow and join each other to form larger and larger streams and then rivers that flow into the ocean. In a healthy watershed, the stream finds its own way and, since it is vegetated along the sides, water flow is slowed, some water seeps into the ground, and even with heavy precipitation, little damage is done to the biological organisms in or along the stream. The algae and insects

in the stream are able to attach and feed, there is plenty of food for the fish and animals and the water is replenished and recycled in a natural way. The various food webs and decomposition forces are intact.

In a damaged watershed, the streams cannot flow naturally. The hilltops and hillsides may be covered with asphalt and concrete. The water cannot soak into the ground and instead runs off carrying the toxics of urban living—oil and gasoline from driveways and roads, asbestos and copper from tires, pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizer from lawns, and paint, glue, dog poop etc. The streams of the damaged watershed are channeled by concrete or rock sides to "straighten" the flow and protect against flooding of surrounding development. With channeling there will be no plants or native stream organisms to absorb water and recycle it. Also, the flow of

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## MONITORING MSCP PRESERVED LANDS

The goal of the MSCP for the unincorporated part of the County of San Diego is the conservation of approximately 101,000 acres of land. Since the inception of the MSCP, approximately 48,000 acres of land have been conserved, through transfer of fee title or conservation easements. This preserve land requires monitoring for biological integrity, including the 85 species covered by the MSCP. The County of San Diego has received grant funding from the California Department of Fish and Game, under the (Natural Communities Conservation Program) NCCP Act, for various monitoring projects around the unincorporated parts of the County, which totals approximately \$400,000. Monitoring includes field surveying of properties for baseline biological information to determine precisely what plants and animals exist on these preserved lands.

Sensitive plant monitoring on preserved lands are occurring over this field season (2001) and next (2002) on areas that span the MSCP Subarea and each Segment within the Subarea Plan. In the Lake Hodges Segment, vegetation mapping and sensitive plant population mapping of ~2,500 acres using Global Positioning System (GPS) technology are occurring on the open space areas of 4S Ranch and in Santa Fe Valley/Lusardi Creek. In the Metro-Lakeside-Jamul Segment, similar methods are employed for baseline vegetation surveys of ~10,000 acres on The Boys and Girls Club south of Iron Mountain, McGinty Mountain south of Sweetwater River, and Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve/Hollenbeck Canyon east of Jamul. In the South County Segment, two areas totaling nearly 500 acres are being mapped north and south of the eastern arm of Otay Lakes. A separate vegetation-mapping project involves the ground-truthing of high-resolution aerial digital images of Lusardi Creek and 4S Ranch gathered by a team at San Diego State University. It is hoped that using these technologically advanced methods will become cost-effective methods of monitoring large areas of preserved lands in the future, detecting areas that display changes over time, thereby identifying areas that may require direct intervention, e.g., the removal of exotic species.

Birds present on coastal sage scrub are being surveyed on the Lakeside Linkage of the Metro-Lakeside-Jamul Segment of the MSCP. The methods used involve establishing long-term monitoring

locations and the collection of baseline data that can be used for comparative efforts in the future. In this way, populations of birds that utilize coastal sage scrub habitats can be monitored for any detectable changes. Also in the Lakeside Linkage, populations of the California Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica californica*) will be investigated to document breeding territories, distributions, and dispersal rates of juveniles and adults. This work involves banding by a licensed biologist. Funding has also been awarded to prepare a Framework Management Plan for Lakeside and Lusardi that will aide in the long-term viability of the biological resources in the areas.

A project that is nearing completion is the preparation of a Habitat Management Plan for the Crestridge Ecological Preserve in the Metro-Lakeside-Jamul Segment of the MSCP. The Conservation Biology Institute and others performed this work, under the Back Country Land Trust. Detailed surveys were performed of the diversity of insects, birds, and plants. The data was digitized and analyzed along with existing data such as the fire history. In this way, management recommendations could be formed that will ensure the integrity of the biological resources present for future generations.



Quino Checkerspot Butterfly; Courtesy of Fred Roberts

The Quino Checkerspot Butterfly (*Euphydryas editha quino*) is federally listed as endangered. The County of San Diego has received a grant from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to prepare an amendment to the MSCP Subarea Plan that would result in this species being covered. An entomologist, David Faulkner, began working in March to try to find populations of this butterfly on preserved land in the southern part of the MSCP on the Rancho Jamul Ecological Preserve and Hollenbeck Canyon areas east of Jamul.

## PARK VOLUNTEERS PROVIDE VISITORS WITH NATURE EXPERIENCE

The County park and preserve system provides a unique opportunity for nature lovers to share their knowledge and experiences with the public. The Department of Parks and Recreation provides training to interested volunteers to become docents, leading tours and providing interpretive programs. This outreach effort is an important part of the MSCP because it provides public access to the preserves as well as educates the public.



The Parks and Recreation Department's docent coordinator, Cailín Ní Chruaíoch, provides extensive training for those who want to lead nature tours and provide interpretive information to the public.

Currently, docent groups provide nature tours at Wilderness Gardens Preserve, Volcan Mountain Preserve, Blue Sky Ecological Reserve, San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Preserve, and Hellhole Canyon Open Space Preserve. Other docent groups are concentrating on the County's historical sites at Los

Peñasquitos Preserve and Rancho Guajome Adobe.

These volunteers donate hundreds of hours of their time to take the public on walks through the parks, explaining the importance of habitats, identifying birdcalls, and promoting the ethic of conservation. Sometimes, the volunteers even get involved in bird census efforts, rare plant identification, and other scientific investigations under the supervision of a qualified expert.

Volunteer groups are also trained and deployed as volunteer patrols. Mostly on horseback, these volunteers are given training and skills to patrol the parkland; their presence discourages inappropriate activities and helps keep park users on trails and in developed areas. Along with providing their service, the volunteers themselves get valuable training and are able to ride into sections of the parks that few get to experience.

The docent training and park patrol efforts are expanding. New docent groups are being formed in Tijuana River Valley Regional Park and Otay Valley Regional Park, and volunteer patrols will be created for new open space acquisitions. If you would like to volunteer as a docent or volunteer patrol member, there is a park or preserve near you that needs your help. With over 33,000 acres of parkland from the Tijuana River Valley to the Santa Margarita River, from San Elijo Lagoon to Agua Caliente Park in the Anza Borrego Desert, the County parks system has open space preserves throughout the region. Call Cailín at **(619) 475-3896** for more information.

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the water will be much faster, and when it reaches a non-channeled part of the stream it will "blow out" the flora and fauna. With channeling, the watershed will cease to function as a water storage system for the riparian zone and as a water purifying system for all those who would use this substance.

If we had to pay the cost of the water purification service that is performed by an intact watershed, it would be more that we could possibly afford. Yet we allow this precious resource to be dug up, covered with impervious substances, treated with toxic compounds and discarded as if it were of no value.



This is not a problem unique to San Diego. Water is scarce throughout the world, and little of it is clean enough to use directly from any river or lake. There were more water refugees in the world in the 1990's than war refugees. It is estimated by some, including the United Nations, that the major wars in the future will be fought over water rights. Fortunately, California has recognized this problem and there is major effort to develop watershed protection and restoration plans. This effort, coupled with habitat restoration and limitations on development in native areas, will help us maintain that which remains intact.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Smart Growth Symposium

The National Wildlife Federation and the Planning and Conservation League Foundation are proud to announce their 2001 symposium and workshop entitled **Smart Growth for Californians AND Wildlife: A Call To Action**. It will take place May 19-20 at the University of California, San Diego. For more information please visit their website at <http://www.nwf.org/smartgrowth/sdsymp.html>.

### Keep California Beautiful

Keep California Beautiful, a statewide group, has announced that April will be **Keep California Beautiful Month**. Individuals as well as community, civic and student groups are needed to help with various projects throughout the County. For more information, call **(800) CLEAN-CA** or send an e-mail to [info@keepcaliforniabeautiful.com](mailto:info@keepcaliforniabeautiful.com).

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### **SPECIAL THANKS**

The MSCP would like to express its appreciation to Chris Brown (USGS), Mike Klein, and Royce Riggan, for their generosity in allowing use of their copyrighted photos on the MSCP Earth Day Children's Stickers.



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### **REMINDER:**

**EarthFair 2001** is on  
Sunday, April 22nd at Balboa Park.  
Hours: 10am-5pm  
For more information visit the EarthFair  
website at [www.earthdayweb.org](http://www.earthdayweb.org).

